



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

ROGER BERLINER  
COUNCILMEMBER  
DISTRICT 1

April 23, 2009

Neil Pedersen, Administrator  
State Highway Administration  
707 N. Calvert St.  
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Mr. Pedersen:

I am writing to you regarding the State Highway Administration's design proposals for intersection improvements in connection with the expansion of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

SHA's current plans for four intersections in the vicinity of NNMC have been developed in response to projected traffic impacts from the increase in employees, visitors and patients to the expanded facility, which will open in 2011 as the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC). The additional traffic generated will have a negative effect on WRNMMC, NIH, and especially the surrounding neighborhoods, and must be addressed.

However, I am extremely concerned that SHA's proposal, projected to cost as much as \$200 million, will not produce long-term results and is inconsistent with Montgomery County's overall goal of encouraging "Smart Growth" and sustainable transportation choices. In fact, after this expenditure, assuming the state actually comes up with the needed funds, it is expected that the currently failing intersections would return to a failed state almost immediately. While some improvements to these intersections may be necessary and beneficial, they should be consistent with a comprehensive transportation vision for the area and with an overall goal of reducing the number of cars on the roadways.

Indeed, the BRAC expansion of Navy Med provides an opportunity to develop and implement a unified, progressive approach for handling traffic in the area around the hospital as well as the adjacent White Flint Sector, where the Montgomery County Planning Department is envisioning a redesigned Rockville Pike that will include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, an expanded median with attractive landscaping, and bus priority lanes. In addition, I would also like to examine the economic feasibility of adding additional Metro stations in the White Flint area to further reduce automobile dependence.

Consistent with the vision for White Flint, the BRAC Implementation Committee and neighborhood groups have recommended improvements that include a new Medical Center Metro entrance on the east side of Wisconsin Avenue, increased bus service, remote parking and shuttle service for employees, and improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities such as accessible crossings, sidewalks, on-road bicycle lanes and shared-use paths. Most of these suggestions are aimed at reducing vehicular dependence and increasing alternative modes of transit in order effect long-term traffic reduction.

In light of these factors, I strongly urge you to reevaluate SHA's plans for these intersection improvements. I believe that in order to address systemic traffic congestion State and County agencies must work together to adopt a progressive and comprehensive approach designed to reduce the use of single-occupancy vehicles and promote alternate transit modes.

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Berliner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Roger Berliner